



SMALL GROUP STUDY

Worship in Every Area of Life

The book of Psalms is your best friend. It's the book where your heart communes with God--you can find strength, courage and direction in every situation. It is a book of songs accompanied by music written over a 1000 year period by at least 7 composers. King David himself composed over 75 of the Psalms. The Psalms are made up of Hebrew poetry and are divided into 5 books meant to echo the 5 books of Moses (the Pentateuch).

Hebrew Poetry is not like modern poetry in the sense that modern poetry relies heavily on rhymes or parallel sound structure and often includes meter and cadence. In Hebrew poetry parallel sounds aren't important - what does matter is paralleling thoughts, ideas or contrasting them. This is called 'Hebrew parallelism.' This poetry works in 'couplets' - a phrase and then another phrase; the second phrase may either build/add onto or contrast the first.

There are three different kinds of parallelism:

1. Synonymous parallelism - the second thought supports the first thought; even expands a bit
2. Antithetical parallelism - the second thought contrasts/contradicts the first thought
3. Climactic parallelism - the second, third (or more) builds like stairs upon the first thought

Psalms are either Anthropocentric (man centered) or Theocentric (God centered). There are also three keys for interpreting Hebrew poetry:

1. Analyze each line of the couplet -- see how it is related, spot the key words (i.e. but/that)
2. Look for figures of speech -- much poetry is symbolic not literal (i.e. shadow of wings)
3. Consider the author's style -- violent language may express the writer's feelings, not God's (i.e. crush their teeth in their mouth)

In the book of Psalms we learn transparency. God knows it all already; there is no need to hide anything from Him. Charles Spurgeon said, "There is no secret you cannot pour into the ears of God." And, we learn reality--just because you are a believer does not mean you won't go through some really low valleys. However, the main lesson we learn in Psalms is consistency--God's people do not relegate Him to a once a week experience.

Discussion Questions:

- a. In regards to the poetry of Psalms, find examples of Synonymous Parallelism; Antithetical parallelism; Climactic Parallelism.
- b. Psalm 1 is Anthropocentric and Psalm 2 is Theocentric. Can you find other examples?
- c. Why is Psalm 19 an excellent place to learn how God speaks to man?
- d. Read Psalm 22. What does this event describe? What makes this so extraordinary?
- e. Which Psalm is one of the most well know Psalms and is even quoted by pagans, and why?
- f. Psalm 23 is not about death as many believe. What is it about, and how do you know?
- g. In Psalm 59 we catch a glimpse into the prayer life of David. What are three characteristics of this prayer of David?
- h. What are two lessons you can learn from this prayer (Psalm 59)?
- i. What do each of the 5 books of Psalms end with?
- j. Examine your heart: Do you relegate God to only some areas of your life? Can you determine today to consult Him in all areas of your life? And, praise Him for all situations in your life?